DEMOCRATIC
GERMAN REPORT

Vol. XIII No. 1 | January 10th 1964 | Price 15 Pf, 5c, 3d.

Escalation to Peace?

By the Editor

Since the end of the Second World War, Berlin has been one of the most sensitive spots in the world; serious politicians in the various camps have warned that local "incidents" in Berlin could all too easily escalate into world war.

Now there has been a sudden change; an agreement of apparently local significance, which made it possible for Frau Braun of Berlin (West) to take a home-baked Christmas cake to her Uncle Hans in Berlin (East) was concluded in Berlin on December 17th; and there would appear to be grounds to hope that this limited local incident may escalate towards a sensible agreed settlement of some at least of the many problems which bedevil the German situation as a whole, and thus endanger peace.

There are a number of reasons why the Berlin Agreement is of great importance beyond the purely local and humanitarian aspects.

Firstly, German officials from East and West sat down round a table, argued things out between themselves, and reached a factual agreement. At first sight this may not seem important, but hitherto it has been an article of "western" faith that the Germans themselves could not do anything to bring about agreement – it had to be left to the Big Four, Britain, France, USA and Soviet Union.

Secondly, the German negotiators "agreed to differ" on a knotty problem which they could not solve, but then went on to reach agreement on the really important questions. A paragraph in the Berlin Agreement of December 17th 1963 states: "Both sides state that it was impossible to reach agreement on place names and titles". This apparently curious formula got round the obstacle posed by western reluctance to use the name "German Democratic Republic", and a certain eastern reluctance to endorse the phrase "Mayor of Berlin" to describe Willy Brandt who is only Mayor of West Berlin.

Thirdly, practically every development in the German question since the war has led to a further reduction in contact between east and west, and new restrictions on freedom of movement. The Berlin Agreement changed the direction of this development, for the first time improved relations, and led to greater freedom of movement, even though in a limited area and for a limited period.

* * *

The signature of the Berlin Agreement, and the smooth carrying out of its conditions, despite attempts made by some West German politicians and certain sections of the West Berlin press to befog the issue and disrupt the agreement, produced unmistakable signs of a wind of change in some important western circles.

In the past, GERMAN REPORT has had little good to say for Willy Brandt, Mayor of West Berlin, often prominent as a cold war spokesman. In a TV interview on December 30th, however, he showed clearly that he had realised that the frozen attitudes of the cold war were on the way out. He stated:

"With regard to the German question, I do not believe that the formula 'All or Nothing' is of any use. If we continue to use this formula, then we shall have nothing, except for a series of high-sounding political speeches – and I ought to know because I have held enough of them myself. It is no service to anyone if we continue to hold out in the bastions of the war of words of the past few years. It is good to say things, but where something can be done, that is better."

Alexander Abusch, Deputy Prime Minister of the GDR, who played a large part in the conclusion of the Berlin Agreement, outlined future prospects in an interview. He said:

"These negotiations showed that agreement can be reached on a whole series of problems. This is true for relations between the GDR and West Berlin, and for relations between the GDR and West Germany. If this policy of good sense and good will is consistently followed, then it will be possible to reach solutions step by step, first in minor questions and then in the main question – the peaceful and democratic future of the German people. The Berlin Agreement was a hopeful start for further efforts for political detente in Berlin, this dangerous centre of tension."

What Now?

"The Western powers have accepted the following facts:

1. That a German problem has been settled by means of a dialogue between Germans, without any of the occupation authorities.
2. That the Mayor of West Berlin has appeared as a 'loner' with a policy of his own.
3. That East Germany has been accepted as a partner in negotiations, although it is not 'recognised'.
4. That East German officials have been placed in West Berlin. You can look at the question from any point of view you like, but unalterable precedents have been set. What happens now?"

"L'Express", Paris, December 26th 1963

The Berlin Agreement

The Berlin Agreement, establishing facilities for citizens of West Berlin to visit East Berlin over the Christmas and New Year period, was signed on December 17th by representatives of the German Democratic Republic and the Senate of West Berlin.

Under the terms of the agreement, GDR officials were empowered to issue, at twelve special offices opened in West Berlin, daily passes to West Berliners; these passes enabled them to pass the frontier and visit close relations in the eastern part of the city. Many hundreds of thousands of West Berliners took advantage of the passes between December 20th 1963 and January 5th 1964, when the period covered by this first short-term agreement came to an end. Spokesmen of both sides expressed themselves confident that there would be no serious difficulty in concluding similar agreements for future periods.

The official protocol, signed by GDR State Secretary Erich Wendt ("on the instructions of the Deputy Prime Minister of the German Democratic Republic"), and West Berlin Senate Counsellor Horst Korber ("on the instructions of the Chief of the Senate Chancellory acting for the Governing Mayor of Berlin") specified that the agreement had been reached "without regard to the differing political and juristic standpoints of the two sides".

Political observers in Berlin pointed out that in fact, if not in form, the Berlin Agreement was a sort of limited consular treaty between the West Berlin Senate and the Government of the GDR. The pass offices opened in 12 West Berlin schools, and staffed by GDR postal officials, played the role of consulates, and the passes to visit East Berlin by these offices were equivalent to visas.

Background Notes on Berlin Negotiations

On December 17th 1963, representatives of the GDR Government and the West Berlin Senate jointly signed a protocol on the issue of passes during the Christmas period to West Berliners who wished to visit relatives in East Berlin, the capital of the GDR. Nearly every aspect of the anomalous German situation calls for thorough background information if it is to be understood properly, and the Berlin Agreement is no exception. Here are some background notes:

Under the original agreements concluded between the Big Four in 1944 and 1945, occupied Germany was divided into four occupation zones. Berlin, the whole of which had originally been occupied by Soviet forces, was divided into four sectors, occupied by British, French, American and Soviet troops.

The aim of the occupation of Germany was to demilitarise and denazify the country, and to lay the foundation for a peaceable, disarmed and democratic Germany. The aim of the four power administration of Berlin was to provide a central situation for the working of the Allied Control Council, which should supervise this development, and, at the proper time, hand over to a democratic government for the whole of Germany, presumably to be located in Berlin.

The western powers soon began to break the Potsdam Agreement of 1945, main agreement reached by the big four and, as a result, four-power cooperation broke down. By 1949, two German states had been created: in West Germany the German Federal Republic with its capital in Bonn, an old-style capitalist state soon to be remilitarised; and in East Germany the German Democratic Republic, a new-style socialist state with East Berlin as its capital.

The Western allies, while splitting Germany (the crucial break came in June 1948 when a separate currency was introduced in the three western zones), also split the city of Berlin (the currency question made the final break here too).

This development left one small part of Germany up in the air, unattached to either state. This was the territory of West Berlin, a curious enclave occupied by British, American and Western troops, one hundred miles inside the German Democratic Republic.

From 1949 until 1961, the authorities of the German Democratic Republic left open the frontier between East Berlin, capital of the GDR, and West Berlin, the only part of Germany still under occupation rule. The frontier was left open because the GDR wished to refrain as far as possible from steps which would split Germany still more thoroughly.

This open frontier became the scene of smuggling, recruiting-away of GDR specialists, and all sorts of Cold War activities, and it has been calculated that it cost the GDR some 30,000 million marks. In August 1961 this became an impossible drag on the economy of the GDR, and the frontier had to be closed.

Since 1961, there has been a fully-fledged international frontier round the whole territory of West Berlin; and this frontier can only be crossed, like so many other frontiers, by persons in possession of the proper identity papers and permits; all frontier crossers have to go through passport control, customs and currency control, as on other strictly controlled frontiers.

For foreign nationals and for West German citizens, who only wish to cross the frontier in fairly small numbers, this raised no particular problems, and ever since August 1961 this traffic has been running smoothly.

The question of West Berliners wishing to visit East Berlin was more

Reluctant Recognition

"The fact of increased recogntiion can hardly be denied. Communist officials have turned up in free Berlin, at the express invitation of the West Berlin Senate, and have exercised there functions which, however extraordinary, could hardly be performed at all except on behalf of a recognised government... There are other governments as bad (as the GDR, ed.), or almost as bad, or worse. If they are recognised, why not this one also?"

"Daily Telegraph", London, December 28th 1963

complex because of the numbers involved. Only a few years ago this was still one city, and hundreds of thousands have close relatives or friends living in the other part.

This presented a special problem to the GDR authorities; if the huge numbers involved were to queue at the frontier crossing points, particularly at holiday seasons, this could easily have led to trouble; West Berlin provocateurs could easily have caused incidents which might well escalate on a sensitive international frontier.

In order to prevent the assembly of difficult-to-control crowds in the frontier areas, the GDR suggested in August 1961, immediately after the frontier had been closed, that "pass offices" should be opened in West Berlin, well away from the frontier, at which credentials could be checked, currency declarations be prepared, etc., thus speeding the actual frontier crossing.

Pass offices of this sort were actually opened in August 1961, but within a few hours they were shut by West Berlin police, acting on orders given by the three western commandants, who still exercise final control in West Berlin.

In the course of the subsequent two years, the GDR authorities repeatedly suggested to the West Berlin authorities that pass offices should be opened; these offers were all ignored.

Thus for 28 months, from August 1961 to December 1963, the West Berlin Senate (the city government) was responsible for preventing West Berliners from being able to visit their relatives in East Berlin. The excuse was the old one used ever since 1949: "The GDR does not exist; therefore GDR pass offices cannot be opened in West Berlin."

In the meantime there has been a perceptible change in the international climate, and mounting pressure from the citizens of West Berlin. On December 5th 1963 the GDR Government proposed once again the opening of pass offices, and this time the West Berlin Senate responded. After involved negotiations, the Berlin Agreement was signed on December 17th, GDR pass offices were opened in West Berlin, and West Berliners could get permits to visit East Berlin.

FIVE STEPS FORWARD

"Abandon Frozen Attitudes" – Ulbricht

The Berlin Agreement has broken through the frozen attitudes of the cold war, and could be the starting point for a movement towards negotiations and understanding between the two German states, Walter Ulbricht, Chairman of the State Council of the GDR, stated in Berlin on January 3rd.

"In the past the West German Government has held up West Berlin as a pattern (in the cold war)" Walter Ulbricht said. "Now the West Berlin Senate and Mayor Willy Brandt have really set an example, a sensible example of negotiations and understanding. This example will win great importance in the relations between the two German states.

"The Berlin Agreement has created a basis upon which further negotiations are possible, leading to agreements which accord with the interests of both sides. Naturally these agreements must be such that the GDR does not suffer any economic damage."

Chairman Ulbricht suggested the following five points as a basis for negotiation between the two German states:

1. Trade between the two German states and West Berlin should be normalised and extended.

2. The GDR and the German Federal Republic should agree to renounce nuclear arms, including multilateral projects, and should cooperate in urging a nuclear-free zone in Europe.

3. The two German states should agree on an arms stop, and on no increase in arms budgets.

4. Representatives of the two German states should agree to normalise relations with each other.

5. Joint commissions, composed of representatives of the two German states and of West Berlin, should be established to encourage peaceful coexistence and to make preparations for overcoming the partitioning of Germany.

Chairman Ulbricht made it clear that these were not cut and dried proposals, but simply suggestions, and that the GDR would be ready and willing to discuss proposals made by West Germany.

"One thing we should like to make quite clear to the citizens of West Germany", Walter Ulbricht stated. "A peaceful solution of the German problem is only possible if West Germany renounces multi-lateral nuclear armament, renounces a policy of revenge, and shows good will in the disarmament question. A policy of non-recognition of the GDR makes reunification quite impossible. The Bonn Government does not like us, and we do not like the Bonn Government, but we are ready to negotiate with, and to recognise, the Government of the West German Federal Republic on a basis of equality.

"Neither the Great Powers nor the UNO can replace negotiations and certain steps towards understanding between the two German states, and between the GDR and West Berlin. There can only be a united Germany when both German states are disarmed and militarily neutral."

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WANTED — But He's Unwanted

A British citizen has been languishing in prison in the German Democratic Republic, but oddly enough there has been no outcry in the British press.

The lack of clamour is perhaps not so odd, because the man concerned is a hardened criminal who escaped from Nottingham Jail in August. The GDR authorities, who have no interest in visitors of this type, have offered to hand him back to the British authorities, but their offers have been ignored. A Foreign Office spokesman in London stated on December 22nd that they could not accept the escaped convict because Britain has no diplomatic relations with the GDR.

The facts of this peculiar case are as follows: On August 20th 1963, the Scotsman Patrick Meechan, serving an eight-year preventive detention sentence in Nottingham Jail for shopbreaking, escaped during a cricket match.

On August 29th he presented himself at a frontier crossing point of the GDR, without any passport or papers. He explained that he had made his way to Dublin, flown to Frankfurt/Main, and then made his way to the GDR. Asked by GDR police to name his last place of residence, he explained that he had been a convict in Nottingham Jail.

The GDR authorities checked up on Meechan to the best of their ability, and on September 19th submitted an aide memoire to Mr G. M. Braidwood, British Consul in Prague, outlining the facts of the case and asking what they should do with this British subject, unwanted in the GDR but apparently "wanted" by Britain. The aide memoire was returned, with no comment, on September 24th. No communication on the subject of Meechan has been received, either directly or indirectly, from Britain.

A GDR Foreign Office spokesman told GERMAN REPORT: "This case is becoming ridiculous; there is no question of diplomatic recognition involved; we simply want to hand Meechan back to the competent authorities."

The spokesman pointed out that in parallel cases involving West German criminals apprehended in the GDR, there was never any difficulty, although West Germany, like Britain, does not recognise the GDR; escaped convicts and wanted criminals are simply handed back.

When other western countries have wanted to recover citizens detained for one reason or another in the GDR, they have found ways and means of doing so, observers in Berlin pointed out. In 1958, nine US Army men made a forced landing with a helicopter in the GDR; after prolonged negotiations, slowed by American reluctance to admit that the GDR even existed, the US soldiers were returned to West Germany under an arrangement by which the US authorities "took cognisance of the reality of the existence of the GDR as a sovereign state" without extending any sort of diplomatic recognition.

Auschwitz Criminals Go On Trial

Twenty-two SS guards from Auschwitz, biggest nazi liquidation camp, went on trial in Frankfurt/Main, West Germany, on December 20th. They are charged with murder, or conspiracy to murder; there is no death sentence in West Germany, and the highest penalty which they can receive will be life imprisonment. Only eight of the accused men are in custody; the others are free on bail.

The Auschwitz trial is expected to last for about six months; many hundreds of witnesses will be heard. On the opening day of the trial Wilhelm Boger, chief of security in Auschwitz, caused a disturbance in court when he said: "I want to pay my respects to those of all races and nations who lost their lives, including the SS." Referring to the fact that West German police had helped him when he escaped from American custody soon after the war, Boger said: "This shows that Germans can stick together."

The fact that the SS guards of Auschwitz have gone on trial at all is mainly the result of the persistence of reporters of the "Frankfurter Rundschau", leading liberal West German daily. The West German authorities had taken no steps to track down or prosecute the men concerned, although most of them were living in West Germany under their own names and without any attempt to conceal their past history.

The story of the newspaper campaign began in December 1958, when the officials of the Wiesbaden Restitution Office held an office party. At this party the officials, whose job it was to rule on the claims lodged by nazi persecutees, sang anti-Semitic songs. The story got into the "Frankfurter Rundschau", and two of the officials were sacked. Following up the story, reporters from the newspaper contacted Emil Vulkan, a former prisoner in Auschwitz who had survived. Vulkan had in his possession a few old papers from the concentration camp, to which he did not attach any particular importance.

The reporters looked at the papers, and realised they had made a find; they were official reports on executions in the camp, with the full names of the men responsible. The "Frankfurter Rundschau" opened its campaign, and were lucky to find an ally in Fritz Bauer, Public Prosecutor of Hesse Province, and one of the few law officials in West Germany who has made any serious attempt to track down nazi criminals. With no difficulty, Bauer's prosecuting attorneys identified no fewer than 950 SS guards from Auschwitz, none of whom had been prosecuted for their crimes. Owing to the lack of concrete evidence — twenty years have passed since the gas chambers of Auschwitz worked day and night — proceedings could so far only be opened against the 22 men now on trial in Frankfurt. A further 17 guards are expected to go on trial during 1964.

Observers pointed out that the men on trial are only "minor murderers", the men who fired the fatal shot, or who threw the gas containers into the gas chambers. The men who organised the murders, ranging from ex-Secretary of State Hans Globke who drafted the anti-Semitic legislation, to the directors of IG Farben who ran the Auschwitz factories in which prisoners were worked to death, are at liberty.

GDR Death Sentence

A GDR court sentenced a nazi murderer to death on December 16th. At the trial, held in Neubrandenburg, evidence was given that the criminal, Roland Puhr, had personally executed at least 30 Soviet prisoners of war while he was serving as SS guard at Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp in 1941. Puhr was only recently identified; he had been living in the GDR under a false name since the end of the war.

OPIUM & EDITORS

By Eustace Gordon

The military junta which runs South Vietnam banned a Saigon newspaper in December for the original reason that the editor smoked opium; reading one or two American and West German papers recently I have wondered whether their editors are not drug addicts too.

Let us take for example Mr Henry Luce's weekly newsmagazine "Time", which prides itself on its enormous research section and the alleged accurracy of its reports. On December 6th, "Time" devoted a whole column to the "starving East Germans". Here are just a few sentences from this report:

"East Germans are getting barely enough to eat. Their faces tend to look grey because of the lack of citrus and other fresh fruits ... Most foods are rationed ... In Saxony each person's theoretical weekly allowance is ... about six ounces of butter. Prices are about four to five times as high as in West Germany."

This "Time" report is a curious mixture of lie, unsupported assertion, and more-or-less truth which falls on its face when you look at it more closely.

First the downright lie:

"Prices are about four or five times as high as in West Germany." This is nonsense, and the "Time" representative in West Berlin could have discovered this with no trouble by taking a short trip into East Berlin and looking at the shops (something which he can do without a visa or any sort of special permission). He would have discovered that some foods, bread and potatoes for instance, are considerably cheaper in the GDR than in West Germany; other foodstuffs are rather more expensive, but the difference is never "four or fime times" except for canned pineapple, which is in fact four times as expensive in the GDR. The price of pineapple is scarcely a good guide to general price levels.

Secondly the unproved assertion:

"Their faces tend to look grey because of the lack of citrus and other fresh fruits." Citrus fruits are short in the GDR, mainly because the socialist world is regrettably short of orange growing areas, and the GDR cannot spare much hard currency to buy the Florida crop. I have not noticed more than the usual proportion of grey faces in the GDR, so I consulted a local doctor on this assertion. He told me: "We have absolutely no trouble with vitamin deficiencies, and local production and imports from countries such as Bulgaria provide all the fresh fruit we need. The only diet trouble which we see frequently in our practices is overweight; people are simply eating too much. And of course there is cholesterol trouble; nearly everybody here eats too much butter."

Which brings me to subject three, the "more-or-less truth":

"Each person's allowance is about six ounces of butter". This statement is roughly true, though official fugures show that per capita consumption of butter in the GDR lies at about eight ounces a week; don't let us quibble about those two ounces. What makes this statement really fascinating is that butter consumption in the United States is eight pounds per head per year (US "World Almanach 1961"), which works out at less than 2½ ounces per head per week. If six ounces per head make the East Germans grey-faced, what do 2½ ounces per week make the Americans?

But let us leave Mr Luce's "Time" and turn to West Germany's "Bild", a daily scandal sheet which has the biggest circulation in West Germany, and which makes the London "Daily Mirror" and the "New York Daily News", its nearest equivalents, look like sober puritan tracts. Reporting on a visit to East Berlin on December 21st, "Bild" came up with an unforgettable truth about the GDR: "In a butcher's shop I saw meat in the shop window: but it may not be sold. It is only there for show."

The reporters from "Bild" obviously must smoke opium, even if only to drown the stench of those decaying show-case legs of pork.

Footnote: The article above was written before the Christmas holidays, which produced an unsurpassed flood of "East Germany is starving" stories. Most of them were confined to the more irresponsible West Berlin and West German papers, but some of them slopped over into the press in other parts of the world. Some sort of prize should go to the UPI reporter (the story was apparently confined to the West German circuits of this news agency) who interviewed the predictable poor old woman in East Berlin who never found any smoked pork in the shops, and another poor old woman who had to queue for hours to buy coffee and chocolate. This was quite an achievement, because smoked pork, a favourite German dish, is the one sort of meat which is always on sale in all the shops, even if there is a shortage of veal or steak; and in 13 years in the GDR I have never yet seen a queue for coffee or chocolate, though they are admittedly expensive.

Best comment on the starvation story came from a school janitor, whom I encountered recently moodily sweeping up a pile of sandwiches, thickly spread with butter, sausage and cheese, discarded by children in a school in one of East Berlin's least prosperous districts during a school break. "I sweep up about 20 lbs of this stuff every day" he told me. "It's nice for the pig swill, but I wish parents would realise that because they only had dry bread themselves at school, they don't need to stuff their little darlings."

British-GDR Trade Rises

There will be a considerable rise in British-GDR trade in 1964 under the terms of an agreement signed in London on December 19th between the Federation of British Industries and the GDR Chamber of Foreign Trade.

Under the new agreement Britain will supply goods to the value of £11½ million (£8½ million in 1963) ranging from machinery to consumer goods. The GDR will supply Britain with goods to the value of £11½ million (£9½ million in 1963) including machinery and large quantities of fertiliser.

We Stand Corrected

A confusing printing error marred our story on West German Minister Hans Krüger, former nazi, in the issue of December 13th. In the penultimate paragraph on page 178 we cited a letter from the nazi judicial authorities in Danzig dated "January 26th 1962". The correct date should, of course, be **1942.** Commenting on the error, an observant British reader said: "Of course, we all know that many of the old nazis are still active, but surely they are not still dispensing 'justice' in Danzig."

You Ask – We Answer

Health Care for Workers

"Your article on the GDR health services on October 18th was interesting, but I should like to know more about what is being done for industrial workers, and also something about rural health services."

M. D., Newcastle

Medical care has moved right into industry in the GDR, and factory doctors are now responsible for preventive measures, medical treatment and after-care. This represents a very big change; in earlier days, under capitalism, factory doctors were employed by the owners and were mainly consultants who could vouch for a worker's state of health, recommend treatment or suggest improvements in a factory, but had little authority and few facilities to do the job themselves.

All factory medical personnel in the GDR are employed by the Ministry of Health, not directly by the enterprises in which they work; preventive and medical work is financed by the social insurance scheme and by government subsidies, so that the medical staff cooperate with, but are not in any way dependent on, factory managements.

Workers get all routine examinations, immunisations, medicines and medical treatment free of charge, and sick pay amounting to 90 per cent of average earnings for up to six weeks of illness in any one year. If sickness lasts longer, sick pay drops to 50 per cent but is supplemented by a special trade union grant. Hospitalisation is free for an unlimited period of time. If the sickness is due to an occupational disease or an accident at work the patient continues to draw the 90 per cent sick pay until he can return to work or until he is pensioned as permanently disabled.

Preventive medical care covers factory hygiene and checking up on many aspects of labour safety – prevention of draughts, suitable working temperatures, ventilation, proper distribution of rest periods and so on – routine medical examinations (and gynaecological examinations for women workers), regulation immunisations and X-ray examinations and routine check-ups for TB, cancer and specific industrial diseases such as silicosis.

Workers going into heavy industry, mining, the chemical industry or other industries involving exceptional working conditions get a thorough medical check-up before they can start on the job.

The factory clinics provide comprehensive medical treatment for workers and their families. There are now 91 large polyclinics in the big industrial enterprises, 187 smaller clinics, nearly 20,00 factory health centres run by doctors and over 1,500 smaller centres run by qualified nurses.

The large polyclinics have departments for surgery, internal medicine, gynaecology and dental treatment, rooms for X-ray examinations, curative baths and visiting specialists. They have qualified staffs of up to one hundred. Fourteen of them also have their own small hospitals, with one or two wards.

A new institution, still in the experimental stage, is the "night sanatorium"; this is a sort of residential clinic where workers can live for a week or so if they are not ill enough to stop work but need special diet, quiet or special regular medical treatment – injections, for instance – which cannot be given so easily at home. There are at present 23 of these night sanatoria, with a total of 613 beds, attached to larger enterprises.

As far as possible, the factory doctor sees his patients right through illness; and even if they have to go to other hospitals or sanatoria, he is required to keep in touch, help them settle in again when they return to work, and see that they get the necessary after-care.

After-care includes convalescent holidays and rehabilitation – for work in the same field as before or at another job if the patient's health does not allow him to return to his old job.

Factory doctors and nurses work closely with the factory branches of the Red Cross, labour safety inspectors and trade union social insurance commissions, as well as with factory managements. They are now paying more and more attention to general health problems – searching for the causes of illness in the production process and working conditions, combatting excessive dust and noise and so on – so that a good factory doctor spends a great deal of time right in the factory, investigating working conditions. A special institute has been set up to guide this work, the Central Institute for Labour Hygiene in Berlin, and all medical faculties have Institutes of Industrial Hygiene.

In order to coordinate their work, the polyclinics in selected big enterprises in the chemical, building and other branches of industry are being developed into guidance clinics for their entire branch, with the special aim of prevention and early treatment of sicknesses typical for the industry. Special centres investigating the causes of silicosis, for example, carry out routine X-ray examinations of all those working with substances damaging to the lungs. So far, forty groups of industrial diseases have been classified and are being studied with a view to prevention and early cure.

All those engaged in heavy or dangerous work receive regular medical check-ups. If necessary, such workers are sent away for rest cures or transferred to other jobs, or given lighter work until their health is fully restored.

* * *

The rural medical service was practically non-existent in 1945. Country people in the backward farming districts in Germany had almost no medical care apart from what struggling country practitioners could provide, and they had had to pay for this, of course, so that the majority only consulted a doctor as a last resort.

This situation has radically changed; there is now a broad network of splendidly equipped rural public health centres, some of them with hospital wards attached and many with maternity clinics, which are linked up with the country medical practices and district nursing centres. There are now nearly 400 government rural health centres (and an additional 26 run by the churches), nearly 500 branch rural health centres and nearly 5,000 district nurses' centres.

Most of the health centres are staffed with a doctor and a dentist and several qualified assistants.

(cont. at foot of next page)

JOB TRAINING FOR ALL

Big Range of Apprenticeships Available

Sixteen year-olds leaving school next summer in the GDR need not worry about the future, for there are jobs waiting for them in many branches of industry. The bulk of apprentices' contracts for training to start next September should be signed by the end of January, and some wideawake youngsters whose school work has been good and who also know exactly what they want to do have signed on already with enterprises which can give them the training they need. In many cases boys and girls decide to stay on in the enterprises in which they had their polytechnical education in the past year. (Children of 13 to 16 in ten-year high school have four hours' practical training per week and 14 to 18 year-olds in 12-year high school have seven hours per week.)

But of course many young people have either not made up their minds, yet or have set their hearts on some kind of training which is not available locally or is already overcrowded, and there are advisory offices which help them to make up their minds or to find something akin to what they have in mind.

In East Berlin, for example, sixteen year-olds can choose between 185 different kinds of training this year, but there is a run on some currently popular trades. There have already been nearly 300 applications for motor mechanics' training, for which there are only about 100 vacancies; 150 have applied to learn radio mechanics, but there are only 17 vacancies in Berlin; 128 girls want to learn hair-dressing, but there are only 44 vacancies.

There are also far more applications then vacancies in electrical and precision mechanics, graphic art, infant nursing and several other types of training. On the other hand, few boys and girls want to train as metalworker, fitter or machinist; for example, there are more than 200 vacancies for electro-fitters' training and only about half as many applicants so far, about 190 vacancies for turners and only about 20 applicants, and in a number of important metal trades there have been no applications at all. Another important industry — building — which offers 350 openings for various types of training, has only had about 30 applications.

So the Berlin advisory office is now busy interviewing all school-leavers who have not yet made their own arrangements, in an effort to help them decide which of the available openings they should apply for. Advisors have received detailed descriptions from the various enterprises of exactly what can be learned in each branch and what future prospects there are after apprentices' training. Some firms have even provided short documentary films.

Those who leave school with "Abitur" (about the equivalent of GCE — A-Level in England) are all being encouraged to apply for university entrance; their entry forms have all to be sent in by mid-January. Here again the majority of openings are in the natural science and technical faculties, and in teaching, so that some applying to study in the various branches of philosophy may not be acepted next September. For these, and for others who for various reasons do not want to attend university, there are openings in 40 different kinds of more advanced training, such as chemical laboratory assistant, building engineering draughtsman, physio-therapeutist, medical-technical assistant and so on.

In East Berlin, for example, where about 900 boys and girls will leave high school with "Abitur" this summer, places for 750 apprentices will be held open until the end of March, when all should know definitely whether or not they are to attend university in the coming September.

(cont. from previous page)

More and more country people are now receiving regular prophylactic and medical attention which is, of course, free under the social insurance scheme. The state farms and agricultural producers' cooperatives have their voluntary labour safety inspectors and Red Cross groups which cooperate with the medical authorities and have similar functions to those in the factories. About 80 per cent of the rural population now take advantage of the medical facilities provided. Rural workers have exactly the same benefits as city workers, and conditions are similar for cooperative farmers under their social insurance scheme.

Notable improvements have been made in the district nurses' advisory services for expectant mothers, infant welfare and all kinds of health protection for mother and child. The vast majority of mothers in rural areas, too, now give birth to their babies in maternity clinics. Women workers in rural areas have the same rights as those in the towns, of course, including six weeks off on full pay before confinement and eight weeks after confinement, and full job security.

Plant Exports

The GDR delivered 52 complete industrial plants to the emergent countries between 1955 and 1963. These included:

To Indonesia: a sugar factory which can process 2,000 tons of sugar cane a day;

To Burma: a cement factory with a daily output of 580 tons, and a big textile factory;

To Egypt: two spinning factories, two textile combines, 17 refrigerating plants, two power stations, a printing works, and an over-ground cable network 200 miles long with 17 transformer and switch stations;

To Syria: a cement factory and a textile factory;

To Guinea: a big printing plant in Conakry;

To Ghana: a printing plant now being built;

To Cuba: cement factories and a big textile combine with an annual capacity of 30 million square metres of fabric.

There are 42 theatre orchestras and 42 symphony and light orchestras in the GDR.

In the GDR there are 3,500 amateur theatrical and cabaret societies, 1,000 drawing and painting circles, 100 amateur symphony and chamber music orchestras, 5,500 amateur dance bands, 5,000 choirs, 1,500 folk dance groups, 400 amateur film societies and 350 worker-writers' study circles.

BERLIN NOTEBOOK

By John Peet

The Spaniards have an advantage which I do not know of in any other language: they put exclamation marks and question marks at the beginning of sentences as well as at the end, so that the reader knows in advance when he should be astonished and when a question is coming.

Obviously this excellent idea should be extended; I would greatly welcome some sort of punctuation mark which would show slightly dense readers that what follows is a joke, for instance. And what about some special way of printing really crazy-pushmepullyou stories, of which there are so many about? Let us have a go, and see if the idea catches on:

On December 6th 1963, the Governments of Britain, France and the United States very solemnly informed the United Nations, in an official letter, that "the so-called German Democratic Republic does not exist". Five days later the Government of the United States solemnly issued an "Executive Order" permitting the export to the non-existent German Democratic Republic of large quantities of grain, clover seed and other products. That is the end of this perhaps explain to readers, who are by now, that this method of present- ing reading matter is not my invention but was thought up by the ancient Greeks, who called it "bou- strophedon" — as the ox turns in ploughing. And there is a perfectly serious gentleman in Estacado, Ore- gon, USA, who is urging the re-adoption of this method of writing because, he claims, it exercises both sides of the brain turn-about. I had better go back to normal methods now: I expect trouble enough with my printers as it is.

Titles

It is always very easy to laugh at other peoples and their habits, ranging from the British predilection for living in clammy houses to the Argentinian habit of drinking tea through straws; and people from many countries find odd the German habit of hanging endless titles on the front of their names. If I remember rightly, Mark Twain had a lot of fun with titles like "District-Master-Chimneysweeps-Widow".

One of the more notable pyramiding effects is reached by scholars, who burst into public view disguised behind a good panoramic stretch of "Professor - Doctor - Doctor Honoris Causa", though for some reason I have never been able to fathom the title usually dries up after the second doctorate. (Incidentally, in socialist Germany, the title sometimes wins a new dimension; I just noted a "Comrade-Professor-Doctor" in the papers).

But this rather discursive beginning brings me to my real point. A news item recently mentioned that several GDR research ships would be taking part in the international oceanographic survey during the International Year of the Quiet Sun; and two of the ships are called Professor Albrecht Penck and Professor Otto Krümmel. I could scarcely believe my eyes; the title professor looked so naked without a string of doctors following it.

Intensive research showed that the ships, perhaps because they are only small vessels, with limited space for names on their bows, are making do with the professor title only, although their namesakes, noted geographers, could lay claim to their fair share of other titles.

And all this, in its turn, brings me to my first question of 1964: Do other nations have professorships at sea?

Wit

When I was young and innocent, I thought that the debates in the British House of Commons were probably displays of high political quality and rapier-like wit. Now that I read the Parliamentary Reports fairly regularly, I am not so sure. For example, take this exchange on December 9th last year:

Mr Wigg: I was unaware that I had made any mendacious statements about the hon. member for Kidderminster. I do not give tuppence about his personal character. He has cold feet, but after all that is not an attack on his character.

Sir G. Nabarro: Are members opposite allowed to indulge in mendacity unlimited? ... I used the word mendacity in connection with the allegation that my feet are cold.

Mr Wigg: I am acknowledging that the hon. member's feet have been cold and his head has been big. I would welcome the opportunity of warming up the one and reducing the size of the other ...

Sir G. Nabarro: If television like to invite Mr Wigg and me to debate on a mutually convenient occasion ...

Mr Wigg: The hon. member funked it last time.

Sir G. Nabarro: The hon. gentleman said I was a funk, and it is the first time I have ever been called a funk or accused of having cold feet.

Mr Wigg: But you have got a big head.

Sir G. Nabarro: It is 7¼. That is a very big head, but there is a lot inside it.

... and so on, ad infinitum. To readers who may believe I have invented this, I should stress that it is quoted from "The Times" of London, December 10th, page 6.

Panic

The panic anxiety of the West German authorities to ensure that nobody should recognise the very existence of the German Democratic Republic sometimes reaches ludicrous heights. The latest example came in early December when Belgian Foreign Minister Paul-Henri Spaak visited Poland. Immediately after the end of the visit, the West German Government officialy protested in Brussels because:

a) Spaak had attended a reception in Warsaw at which the GDR ambassador was also present.

b) Spaak had dared to visit the non-existent GDR on his way to Warsaw. I am glad to report that the Belgian Foreign Ministry replied coolly to the following effect:

a) when you are invited somewhere it is not usual to censor the invitation list of your host.

b) the plane from Brussels to Warsaw on which Spaak travelled always lands at the East Berlin airport, and Spaak could scarcely be expected to get out in mid-air to avoid touching down there.

This latest Bonn protest is about the oddest I have noticed to date, but I feel confident they can do even better if they try. We shall keep you informed.

Comprehend?

In the last Notebook I gave a couple of examples of the slightly bent English in the "Travel Guide to the German Democratic Republic", my favourite humorous book of the year. Further research uncovered this interesting sentence:

"Whoever wishes consciously to comprehend the landscape around Dresden should, by clear weather, ride up into the tower of the new town hall."

Edited and published fortnightly by John Peet. Democratic German Report, Krausenstrasse 9, Berlin W 8, Telephone 22 29 68. Printed in Germany by (204). Veröffentlicht unter Lizenz-Nr. 604 beim Presseamt des Ministerpräsidenten der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik.

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